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ABSTRACT

Following a study of literature pertinent to the subject, a proposed job description and organizational alignment for the extension economist in Ghana were developed. The study implications and recommendations are given. (DB)

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THE ROLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SPECIALIST IN GHANA WITH EMPHASIS ON THE EXTENSION ECONOMIST

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THE ROLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SPECIALIST IN GHANA WITH EMPHASIS ON THE EXTENSION ECONOMIST*

by

Daniel Christian Asante

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore the literature and research dealing with the role of extension subject matter specialists with a view to developing a framework which might give direction to Ghana's agricultural extension specialists in general and extension economists in particular in the performance of their duties.

To give the necessary direction to this study, the following two objectives were specified:

1. To establish the functions of an agricultural economist in Ghana and to derive from such functions a job description pertinent to the Ghanaian experience.

2. To develop a guide for aligning the agricultural extension specialists within various organizational structures that might prevail in Ghana's Extension Service.

Scope and Procedure

Literature pertaining to the extension specialist was cited. Personal experiences also served as an important source of information.

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*Summary of Special Problem Report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EXTENSION at Washington State University, Pullman, June 1971.

Studies completed by Harvey, Word, and papers developed by Kansas State University related to organization and functions of the Research Liaison Unit in Northern Nigeria were used extensively. Other references were also quoted. The information thus obtained was used to develop a job description and organizational alignment for the extension economist in Ghana.

Brief History of Specialists

The literature cited indicated that the services of subject-matter specialists had been used in the United States since the days of the early farm societies. It was in the early 1900's, however, that the increased need for research and the changes in the socio-economic conditions resulted in acts and other activities which reflected the great importance of the subject-matter specialists.

The Need for Specialists on the Local Scene and Opportunities for Extension Economists in Ghana

It was established that an increasing need for subject-matter specialists was apparent in Ghana and other developing countries. The consensus, however, was that it was essential for the developing countries to develop their own citizens as specialists and depend less on "nomadic" specialists. This could eliminate the possible cultural gap and increase the relevance of research activities to the needs of such countries.

It was recognized also that the existing conditions in Ghana and other developing countries required an extension economist with a broad knowledge to be able to handle his responsibilities efficiently. His functions would embrace marketing, production, organization, liaison, training, and research.

Functions of Subject-Matter Specialists

With regard to the broad functions of the extension specialist, the emphasis seemed to be on serving as a link between the research institutions and the extension agents, acting as a trainer of the agents in his particular subject-matter field, and as a subject-matter consultant and expert (on call).

Specifically the following functions seem to be prominent.

1. Serve as a resource person for county staff and others to contact for information.

2. Coordinate activities and efforts with those of other specialists in related fields.

3. Advise research workers on current problems needing study.

4. Advise extension administrators and teaching-research staff on problems needing study.

5. Provide agents with appropriate teaching materials in his subject (e.g., bulletins, visuals, etc.).

6. Liaison between experiment station and county extension staff.

7. Keep up to date on pertinent new developments and research in his subject-matter area.

8. Train agents in subject matter, its application and methods of presentation.

Proposed Functions of Extension Economists

The job descriptions of the subject-matter specialist in the Northern Nigerian Research Liaison Section and some states in the United States seem to have been based largely on the functions listed above.

The author suggested the following as the broad function of the extension economist in Ghana: to act as a liaison officer between the

research institutions and the district crop production officers; act as a trainer of the district crop production officers, in economics; and act as a subject-matter consultant and expert (on call).

Specific functions were suggested from which the job description of the extension economist in Ghana was developed. The duties and responsibilities outlined in the job description included the following:

1. Interpret the results of agricultural research to the field staff through:

    a. Preparation of newsletters,

    b. Preparation of popular publications,

    c. Preparation of teaching aids,

    d. Preparation of press and radio releases.

2. Provide economic consultant assistance to study groups of selected districts in gathering facts, identifying problems, studying land use alternatives, organizing cooperatives, and developing overall development programs.

3. Help crop production officers evaluate program progress and communicate results.

4. Maintain effective communications and work relations with:

    a. Other extension staff members,

    b. Members of social science divisions,

    c. Industry, community groups and agencies,

    d. Newspaper, radio, TV stations, etc.

5. Identify economic problems in the field needing research and communicate these needs to research workers following the proper channels.

6. Keep up to date on new research pertaining to agricultural economics.

7. Prepare and maintain an individual written plan for continuous individual professional improvement.

8. Actively participate in weekly staff conferences and induction and in-service training programs provided by the Crop Production Division.

A complete job description is suggested below:

PROPOSED JOB DESCRIPTION

TITLE	EXTENSION ECONOMIST, GHANA
LOCATION IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	The Extension Economist is responsible administratively to the Chief Crop Production Officer (through the officer in charge of the Economics Unit) and to the University Head of Agricultural Economics for subject matter.
NATURE AND PURPOSE OF WORK	The Extension Economist acts as a liaison between Extension workers and research organizations to help improve the economic conditions of the farmers and related organizations. The ultimate objective is to help achieve a higher and more satisfying standard of living for all the citizens of Ghana.
MAJOR DUTIES AND TASKS	
MAJOR DUTIES	TASKS
I. Teaching	o Interprets the results of agricultural research to extension staff and the public through: a. Preparation of newsletters b. Preparation of popular publications c. Preparation of teaching aids d. Preparation of press and radio releases. o Keeps field service staff up to date on latest recommended practices in agricultural economics.

- o Assists extension personnel and local, district, and regional leaders to understand the organizational levels where appropriate actions take place.

- o Serves as an on-call source of agricultural information for field services staff on day-to-day economic problems which arise.

- o Provides economic consultant assistance to study groups of selected districts in gathering facts, identifying problems, studying land use alternatives, cooperative organizations, and developing over-all economic development programs.

- o Conducts public meetings on problems related to economics.

II. Research

- o Identifies economic problems in the field needing research and communicates these needs to research workers following proper channels.

- o Assists extension staff in developing and conducting economic studies relevant to the extension program.

- o Engages in a limited amount of research in economics and collaborates with research staff on special projects.

III. Programming

- o Prepares background information and economic projections that will be useful to regional and district leaders in visualizing agricultural and industrial opportunities and to extension administration in charting future educational methods.

- o Prepares a detailed written annual plan of work and submits it to superior officer for approval.

- o Helps Crop Production Officers evaluate program progress and communicates results.

IV. Administration

- o Manages office and maintains records.
- o Prepares monthly and annual reports and submits to superior officer.
- o Answers correspondence.

V. Public Relations

- o Maintains effective communication and working relationships with:
  - a. other extension staff members
  - b. members of social science division
  - c. industry and community groups and agencies
  - d. newspaper, radio, TV stations, etc.
- o Maintains close working relationship with research workers in the area of agricultural economics.

VI. Professional Improvement

- o Keeps up to date on new research pertaining to agricultural economics.
- o Prepares and maintains an individual written plan for continuous individual professional improvement.
- o Participates in professional organizations and their activities.
- o Actively participates in staff conferences and induction and in-service training programs provided by the Crop Production Division.

QUALIFICATIONS

1. Proficiency in agricultural economics and related areas. Training in agricultural economics beyond the Bachelor's level is desirable.
2. A thorough knowledge of the philosophy and objectives of extension, and ability to apply the principles of adult education.
3. Knowledge of policies and regulations which govern the activities of the extension economist.
4. Knowledge and understanding of the culture of the clientele.
5. Ability to identify and cooperate with the leaders in a community to achieve extension objectives.

6. Ability to work harmoniously with extension staff, research staff, and others to identify and solve problems.

7. Understanding of research methodology and ability to explain concisely research findings to extension staff and public.

8. Ability to determine the basic problems, wants, needs, and desires of the clientele.

9. Ability to determine training needs of extension workers.

10. Ability to communicate effectively (written and spoken).

11. Possess physical, mental, and emotional stability.

Organizational Alignment

The literature reviewed revealed that whether a specialist was subject-matter aligned or extension aligned influenced his role perception and that different specialists perceived their roles differently. There were also differences in the role perception of the specialist among administrators, county agents, and the specialists themselves. Such a situation can lead to role conflicts. Spelling out the different functions of the specialist in job descriptions was therefore essential. It was also important that the alignment of the specialist in the administrative organization be properly defined.

The important criteria for evaluating a good administrative organization embrace the following:

1. The members of the organization are arranged in a determinate subordinate-superordinate hierarchy of line positions, sometimes referred to as the "scalar process" wherein lines of positional authority and responsibility run upward and downward through several levels with a broad base at the bottom and a single head at the top in order to preserve the "unity of command."

2. Definite, clean-cut responsibilities should be assigned to each executive.

3. No person occupying a single position should be subject to orders from more than one source.

4. Give executives enough staff services as required.

5. The main subdivisions of organization should be based upon analysis of activities, and activities that are alike should be put together.

Based on these criteria and the review of literature, two alternative alignments for Ghana were proposed.

The alignments suggested were (1) a "multi-unit" type where the specialists would be administratively responsible to the Chief Crop Production Officer through their respective unit heads. This was opposed to "single-unit" in which the different specialists would be responsible directly to the Chief Crop Production Officer; (2) a combination of subject-matter and extension alignment. This implies that the specialists would be responsible to the Chief Crop Production Officer through their unit heads but would be housed with the universities or other research institutions.

It was the conviction of the author that the latter arrangement would place the specialists closer to research programs where emphasis is very much required under present Ghanaian conditions. It would, at the same time,keep them close to the field problems.

The organizational alignment suggested for the extension agricultural economist is depicted in the following illustration (Figure 1).

Competencies of the Extension Specialists

The study indicated that advanced training preferably through the doctorate or a terminal degree in area of specialization was a necessary qualification for the subject-matter specialist.

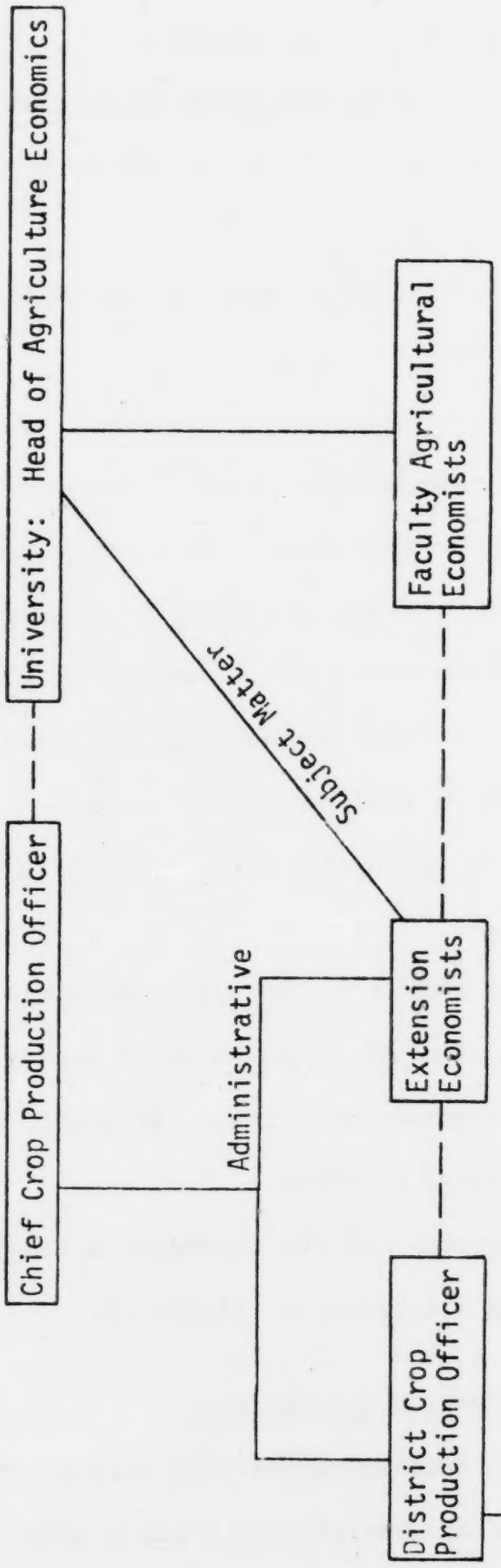

Figure 1. Suggested Alignment for the Extension Economist in Ghana.

The understanding of the philosophies of education, extension, and subject-matter field; organizational ability; the ability to promote technical knowledge and rural development that are in line with national policies and goals; and good training ability are some of the important qualities expected of extension specialists.

It also seems necessary that the subject-matter specialist be broad minded. The extension economist, for example, should understand concepts such as resource allocation, opportunity costs, partial budget, etc. which might be useful especially for his training programs.

Implications

This study should be of great value to Ghana and other countries. Based on the literature cited, suggestions and recommendations, the following implications are evident.

1. There is a great need for extension specialists and greater relevance, efficiency, and continuity of work can be achieved if Ghana and other countries develop their own specialists. If this suggestion is adopted by the Ghana Ministry of Agriculture, it will tend to bring improvement in its program. The author does not imply, however, that this precludes the importance of foreign specialists. It is a matter of change in emphasis.

2. The duplication of functions and inadequate definition of jobs can be a great liability to any organization. The author believes that the job description specified for the extension economist will greatly enhance efficiency in Ghana's Ministry of Agriculture. The problems of marketing, production, organization, and farm management can be handled more effectively if the suggestions made in this study are taken.

3. The suggestion on alignment does not imply a change in the present administrative organization in the Crop Production Division. It implies only a change in the locational positions of the specialists to bring about increased efficiency.

4. The need for coordinated efforts among different research workers also has been implied. The Ghana Ministry of Agriculture would benefit greatly from such an arrangement if the suggestion is put into effect.

5. The author believes that suggestions given on the qualifications of extension specialists and particularly extension economists will be a great help in developing a curriculum for agricultural "specialist" institutions for Ghana and other countries.

Recommendations

On the basis of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. The Ghana government should provide adequate facilities to enable the universities to accommodate the extension specialists. Sufficient research facilities should also be made available to both the research staff of the university and the extension specialists.

2. Each university with an agricultural faculty should be encouraged to carry out research programs on specified fields to avoid duplication of efforts.

3. Agricultural research should be centralized, and consideration should be given to placing such responsiblity under the university.

4. Graduate courses should be established in the universities to train agricultural specialists in economics and other fields. The curriculum for such courses should be designed in such a way that after graduation the specialist would have not only the technical knowledge

but also would have the aptitude and ability to apply such knowledge effectively in the field. Research methodology and agricultural extension methods should therefore form important parts of the curriculum.

5. Research programs for students should be based mainly on the problems in Ghana agriculture. It is recommended that topics in agricultural economics such as the following be given serious consideration:

a. The problems of cooperative establishment in Ghana,

b. The economic implications of mixed cropping,

c. The soil conservation aspects of mechanization and their economic implications,

d. The economic concepts important for the functions of the crop production officer,

e. Analysis of the use of fertilizer and/or pesticides on the net income of the farmer,

f, The problems pertaining to land tenure system in Ghana.

6. Where a particular course is not offered in Ghana, students should be sent abroad to study such courses. The government should,however, arrange to made it possible for such students to conduct their research on Ghanaian problems.

7. There should be a periodic conference (preferably semi-annually) for extension specialists, crop production officers, and research officers to outline their proposals, give progress reports, and evaluate their work. This would give a unity of purpose and alert participants to their responsibilities.

8. The Crop Production Division should clearly outline the job description of the specialists and their organizational relationship with their clients and administrators. The suggestions given in this study could serve as the basis.

9. In the early stages of development of specialists, emphasis should be given to university and research institute based subject-matter specialists. Later, country-wide specialists could be assigned special regions or areas.

10. There should be a specialist unit comprising all the extension specialists and research officers in Ghana. Such a unit should share experiences with similar organizations in West Africa and other African countries. It should also share communication relationships with some of the developed countries for current research findings.

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